

MINUTES

Board Meeting

Tuesday 28 April 2020 at 11.15am

Attendees: Paul Andrews (Chair)

Tom Burgess

Nuala McAuley

Allen McCartney

Mandy McKay

Eamon O'Connor

Lesley Chambers (items 20/27)

Secretariat: Joan McShane

LSA/20/25 Apologies & Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

- 25.01. The meeting was conducted remotely with LSANI staff on site. There was an apology noted from Carolyn McDermott.
- 25.02. No conflicts, other than those previously declared were noted.
- 25.03. NEM Update. Nothing to report.

LSA/20/26 Governance

- 26.01 Minutes of March Board were agreed with two minor changes noted.
- 26.02 Progress Against Action Points – The updates on the action points were noted and agreed.

LSA/A/100 Review to continue of the increase in the volume of bills received and updates to be provided to the Board when available.

LSA/A/102 Project Assessment Review (PAR) – Gateway 5 Review due in January 2021.

- 26.03 The Board noted that there had been no responses from professional bodies in relation to the change requests for LAMS. The Board were further advised that LSA were in the short term, looking at the issues and taking them forward.
- 26.04 The Board noted a successful ‘show and tell’ on printing solutions had taken place remotely with representatives from the Bar and Law Society. The printing solution should be deployed by the end of June 2020.
- 26.05 The Board were updated that two papers had been prepared by Ciaran McGrath on Reviewed Liabilities and Forecast Methodologies which would be available at the May 2020 Board meeting.

LSA/A/111 Reviewed Liabilities & Forecast Methodologies papers to be presented at the May Board.

LSA/20/27 Shared Service Reporting – NICS HR

- 27.01 The HR reports were noted by the Board. The Board were advised that NICS HR had provided managers with a series of FAQ’s on managing staff remotely as part of an advisory and support mechanism which were working well. Resourcing was taking place, albeit at a slower pace and the temporary promotions and recruitment agency contracts had been rolled forward to cover any vacancies.
- 27.02 The Chair updated that there was extensive home working and it was noted that working practices would be different post the pandemic.

Discussion took place in relation to essential posts and HR advised that identifying essential posts would be for LSA to decide and redeploy as appropriate. It was noted that training for redeployed staff carrying out work in operations work would adhere to social distancing guidance. The Board discussed staffing of the planned interim payment scheme.

27.03 The Board discussed the effectiveness of home working against an office based environment. It was noted that preliminary work was taking place on a recovery plan which would include ways to measure productivity of home working against office working. It was noted that with social distancing a priority, the numbers of staff who would be able to be on site could reduce to 60% of the original staff complement with some form of remote working on a rotational basis. The Board noted that a central strategic approach to working from home would be taken in the current context.

27.04 Discussion took place in relation to the level of absenteeism due to illness. The Board noted that management had been working closely with the NICS Employee Relations team to manage long term absence before the lockdown. The Board were further updated that the employee relations function had been rolled out to line management, there had been a slow start and on line training was available, which was accessible for those working from home. It was reported that the HR Employee Relations team had oversight of long term absences and it was agreed that the concerns from the Board would be fed back to them and an update would be provided at the next Board meeting.

LSA/A/112 Feedback from NICS Employee Relations team on management of long term absence to be presented to the next Board meeting.

Lesley Chambers signed off from the meeting at 12.05pm.

- 27.05 The FSD report was noted by the Board. The Board were updated that the 2019 – 20 resource expenditure showed overspend of £250k. They were further advised that this had been the result of unexpected easements in staff costs, recoument of debt, an additional £648k had been secured therefore additional payments were able to be processed. The Board were advised that overspend would be explained in the Accounts.
- 27.05 The Board congratulated the management and staff on delivering a budget in a very challenging year.
- 27.06 The Board noted that forecasting meetings were taking place in relation to the budget for the incoming year 2020 – 21. A detailed paper would be circulated to the Board prior to the June monitoring round, which would contain recommendations on how the monitoring rounds should be treated.
- 27.07 The Board were informed that Carolyn McDermott had been successful in obtaining promotion to G7 and would remain in LSA. It was noted that the service level agreement with FSD was under review in July 2020 and the current level of support was insufficient for the future needs as the team assigned to LSA were under resourced. The Chair advised that there were a number of future challenges which would require the support of FSD.
- 27.08 The Board noted that the current environment with suboptimal activity in Courts may have an impact on the LSA ability to spend the budget allocation for the year 2020 – 21.

LSA/A/113 Paper to be presented to the Board with recommendations on how the monitoring rounds should be treated.

LSA/20/28 Agency Reports

- 28.01 Discussions took place in relation to the business that was being delivered in the current climate. Extensive discussions took place in relation to the

work underway with the introduction of an interim payment scheme, how it would be implemented and the timeframe for implementation. The Chair advised that key messages were being issued regularly rather than going through Stakeholder meetings.

- 28.02 The Board acknowledged the efforts and impressive work that had gone into pulling the scheme together so rapidly. It was noted that without LAMS it may have been impossible to run such a scheme or to deliver business to the current level, as the ability to work from home would have been limited.
- 28.02 Eamon O'Connor updated on the work in progress with the Lord Chief Justice on Family Law cases.
- 28.03 The Fraud and Error report was noted as having been discussed at the ARC.

LSA/20/29 Reform Initiatives

- 29.01 Eamon O'Connor provided an update on EAJD Reform. It was reported that Stephen Martin had been moved to the Emergency Response team, all projects were on track with staff working from home and making regular contact from home.

LSA/20/30 Governance and Corporate Risk

- 30.01 The FOI/DPA monitoring report was noted.
- 30.02 The Security Incidents Report was noted.
- 30.03 The AQW Report was noted.
- 30.04 The amalgamated responses to the Board Effectiveness questionnaire was agreed.

LSA/A/114 A programme of work to be produced from the Board Effectiveness responses and a paper to be presented at the next Board meeting.
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- 30.05 The Board agreed the draft Business Plan for 2020 – 21 should be reviewed in light of COVID 19.
- 30.06 The Board noted that Business Continuity was being revised in view of LAMS and the capability to work away from the office.
- 30.07 It was reported that an anonymous complaint had been received by the HSE and NIPSA had written in relation to staff on site and adherence to Government guidance. Responses had issued and the HSE were content that LSA was following Government guidance and had all the appropriate measures in place so that staff were safe when on site.
- 30.08 The paper on the Annual Report and Accounts from Richard Logan was noted as helpful with a clear trajectory of travel. It was reported that Heads of Branch were working on the contents and feedback was awaited from DoF.

LSA/20/31 AOB

- 31.01 Board discussed Values & Behaviours and no concerns were noted.
- 31.02 It was noted that the WebEx had been difficult at the ARC but there had been no problems at the Board.
- 31.03 The Board asked that their thanks and appreciation of the work being carried out by staff during these difficult times be communicated.

Meeting ended at 1.10pm

Next Meeting: Tuesday 19 May 2020 at 9.30am